



# 7 PARK DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

## OVERVIEW

Meeting the goals of the Chimney Rock State Park master plan will require a park development program that integrates the existing conditions inventory and analysis, needs assessment, park opportunities and constraints, and the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation mission statement. A strong park program will provide the foundation for current and future phases of park development. For the purposes of this master plan, the Chimney Rock State Park Development Program falls into three categories: Conservation Management Areas; Education and Stewardship Areas; and Access and Recreation Areas.

It is important to note that proposed park development program areas are not mutually exclusive from one another. Alternatively, all of the programs will overlap each other to some extent. By determining where conservation, education, and recreation can occur within the park early in the planning process, the programs can and will compliment one another.

## CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT AREAS

Where there is a high concentration of rare species and wildlife habitats as well as significant natural features, a conservation management area is introduced to promote the protection of these sensitive areas. Significant natural heritage area (SNHA) data was examined in combination with other geographic information systems (GIS) data, such as biodiversity and wildlife habitat assessment mapping. Fieldwork and inventory of existing facilities was also considered to determine the best locations for conservation. Because of the sensitive ecology in conservation management areas, public access should be very limited to prioritize natural resource conservation. Trails may traverse some parts of the conservation management areas but no trails will begin or end within these boundaries. Any proposed ancillary features will be planned a substantial distance from the protection areas.



*GPS/GIS mapping*



*Removing invasive plants*



*Identifying rare species*



Conservation management techniques will vary in scale depending on the occurrence of natural communities in each area of the park. Managing landscape connections between significant natural heritage areas will strengthen habitat as well as extend ecological viability for species such as black bear and predatory birds. The landscape connections buffer ecological corridors for species that require large areas for breeding and foraging. These large, unfragmented areas also offer local benefits to smaller species. If managed well, natural resources will thrive and regenerate. The N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation should continue to work closely with conservation partners, such as The Nature Conservancy, Carolina Mountains Land Conservancy, and Foothills Conservancy to ensure the protection of these landscape connections.

The most notable locations for conservation management in the park are areas south of Shumont Mountain, west of Rumbling Bald, and near Round Top Mountain. In the southern park, conservation management areas include areas around Bat Cave, Stony Mountain, and lands north of World's Edge, east of Sugarloaf Mountain, and west of Cane Creek Mountain.

## EDUCATION AND STEWARDSHIP AREAS

Part of the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation's mission is to promote stewardship and provide environmental education opportunities to visitors. Within Chimney Rock State Park, education and stewardship areas will incorporate passive recreation limited to picnicking, easy to moderate guided hiking, and environmental education. These areas may also be accessed by permit or with the guidance of N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation staff, due to their remote location and sensitive surroundings. Rotating programs, established by the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation, would be seasonal and potentially offered to local schools or other interested groups.



*Students in an environmental education class*

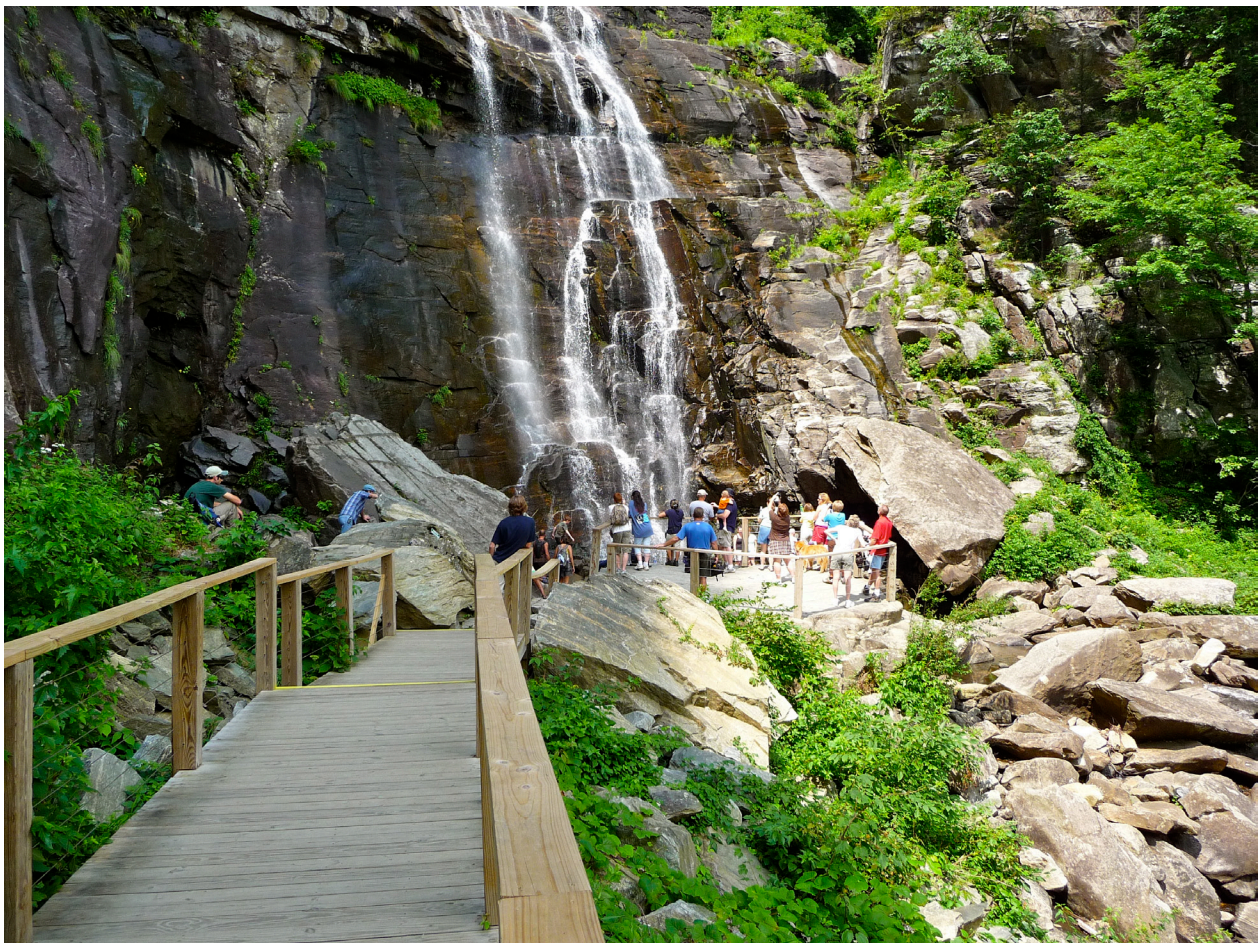


Some areas in the park could be utilized for education and stewardship programs. Examination of significant natural heritage area data indicates that rare species' habitat is occurring all across the study area. However, certain areas are less concentrated, and therefore may be more appropriate for permitted or a guided access facility. Some areas on the north side of Rumbling Bald may be capable of supporting limited hiking. In south Chimney Rock State Park, the Cane Creek Mountain area may also be able to support limited low impact facilities. Because no parking or toilet facilities will be available in the education and stewardship areas, using adjacent access and recreation areas will be necessary.

## ACCESS AND RECREATION AREAS

Close examination of park opportunities and constraints indicate that certain areas of the park are better candidates for public access, due to existing roadways and other amenities. Because Chimney Rock State Park will incorporate low impact and sustainable design principles for park development, considering existing facilities for future use is advantageous and cost effective. Typical access and recreation areas will include vehicle parking, toilet buildings, and visitor ancillary features, such as kiosks and water fountains. These areas include varying levels of passive and active recreation opportunities, depending on the presence of rare plant and animal species, existing roadways, and travel distance from proposed park facilities.

Access and recreation areas are proposed in central, south and north Chimney Rock State Park. This includes the Attraction, Bottomless Pools, World's Edge, and Rumbling Bald. Activities will range from picnicking, easy to difficult hiking, environmental education, and backpack camping (in more remote areas).



*Hickory Nut Falls*



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